

APPROVED MINUTES
MAIDSTONE PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
Thursday, October 19, 2023, 7:00 pm
Held by Zoom Video Conference

Members present (via Zoom): Bruce Barker, Bob Champagne-Willis, Chris von Alt

Other members of Town Government present (via Zoom): Town Clerk and Lister Amy Pear; Lister, Auditor, and Health Officer Sandra Gray; Administrative Assistant to the Selectboard, Zoning Board, and Planning Commission Mary von Alt

Also present (via Zoom): Andy Champagne-Willis, Jesse Noone of Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA)

At 7:01 pm, the meeting was called to order by Chris von Alt, Chairman. Chris welcomed Jesse Noone of NVDA, our regional planning commission. Jesse's availability for participation in the meeting was limited, so everyone agreed to begin with discussion of the FY24 Municipal Planning Grant application, with which Jesse is involved.

UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH THE FY24 MUNICIPAL PLANNING GRANT:

Chris discussed the grant application requirements with Jesse Noone of NVDA last week and also with Jenni Lavoie, Contract and Grants Specialist in the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, which oversees the Municipal Planning Grant. Chris said Jenni told him that the fact that Maidstone does not have a town center will not be held against the Town, but as that is worth 20 points in the grant scoring criteria, Chris is concerned that we will start at a deficit of points. The budget and work plan are worth 35 points; details of the tasks in the work plan and how money is allocated in the budget must be worked out. Chris has a Zoom meeting scheduled with Alison Low and Jesse Noone of NVDA on Friday morning during which he will discuss this. A discussion ensued that included Jesse talking about possibly writing the Town Plan for Maidstone, about researching data and reviewing previous Town Plans, making community visits, and attending meetings. The amount of \$8,000 was referred to as the potential cost of Jesse's work for Maidstone. These are some of the details that will be addressed in the Zoom meeting with Alison and Jesse tomorrow. Amy asked Jesse if he had any information about why Maidstone's Town Plan of 2016 had not been approved by our Regional Planning Commission (NVDA) as required by State law; she wanted to make sure that the Town is aware of any errors made that resulted in the Plan not receiving approval. Jesse was not aware of exactly what happened. All parties now involved are aware of the importance of approval of Town plans by the Regional Planning Commission, so will work to ensure that happens with Maidstone's next Town Plan.

Bob raised the issue of the need to revise the Town's Zoning Bylaws. That is Phase Two, said Chris, the rewriting of the Town Plan being Phase One; revising the Zoning Bylaws should be the focus of a municipal grant application next year. Jesse said the need to revise the Town Plan and utilize it to inform the Bylaws is important information to be included in the current Municipal Grant application, as will be the Town Survey. He thinks our Draft Town Survey looks great and will be very informative; it can be added to the grant application as a supplementary document.

The Selectboard has signed the FY24 Municipal Resolution for Municipal Planning Grant, naming Scott as the primary and Brad as the alternate Municipal Authorizing Official. Both will have to create GEARS accounts (Grant Electronic Application and Reporting System accounts); Amy and Bob will create their own GEARS accounts and will assist Scott and Brad, if that is helpful. Chris suggested contacting Jenni Lavoie prior to creating the accounts, as she was very helpful to him with his GEARS account.

APPROVE 2023-10-04 MINUTES:

Bob made a motion to accept the minutes as presented for the 2023-10-04 Planning Commission Meeting; Bruce seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

DISCUSS AND FINALIZE THE 2023 DRAFT TOWN SURVEY:

The 2023 Draft Maidstone Town Survey, incorporating questions suggested by Planning Commission members, was distributed by the Administrative Assistant to the Commission members, the Selectboard, and the Town Clerk prior to this meeting. Commission members and the Town Clerk reviewed the survey in preparation for this meeting. Discussion focused on several survey questions; everyone analyzed wording of the questions posed and of possible responses from the perspective of how they contributed to achieving the purpose of the Plan. That purpose is to elicit input from residents and property owners, through responses to and comments about questions regarding the vision we all have for Maidstone's future, and how the Town's government can best serve residents' and property owners' needs. The Survey will inform the writing of the new Town Plan, with the Planning Commission working to ensure that the people's vision is reflected in and implemented through the Plan. New wording was decided upon; Mary will revise the Survey as needed.

Bob made a motion to accept the 2023 Draft Town Survey as revised; Bruce seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Amy and Mary will work together to implement the distribution plan of the Town Survey agreed upon at the Planning Commission meeting on October 4, 2023.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Chris spoke with Zoning Administrator Mike Otis just before the meeting tonight. Mike was not able to attend the meeting, therefore asked Chris to bring up a question that has been posed to Mike by Nature Conservancy. The Conservancy is investigating the purchase of a piece of property owned by Mike Tanguay in Brunswick, VT; that property extends across the border between Brunswick and Maidstone. An abandoned railroad track exists that may or may not sever the property into two separate lots, one in Brunswick and one in Maidstone. Whether the property is divided into two lots by that railroad track or needs to be subdivided by the subdivision process stipulated in the Maidstone Zoning Bylaws must be resolved before the purchase can be made. Bob said the bigger issue is that the same situation exists along Route 102, where there are a number of properties that include land on both sides of the highway. The problem is that it is only through the survey that is required by going through the subdivision process that the true acreage of a property is known. Whether or not Route 102 legally subdivides properties that include land on both sides of that road, and whether or not an abandoned railroad track with its inherent right-of-way legally subdivides a property with land on both sides of that track are questions for which answers must be sought. Amy told the Commission that Town Hall gathered all of the information available about the property and gave it to Mike Otis at his request today; she suggested that more time is needed for Mike to have the opportunity to review all of that data. After discussion, the Commission members agreed with Amy and concluded that more information is required.

SET DATE FOR NEXT MEETING:

The Commission did not set a date for the next meeting; that will be accomplished at a later date.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Mary will make the changes to the Draft Town Survey that were decided upon tonight and will send that updated Survey to Commission members and the Town Clerk for a final read. Commission members may be asked to complete a practice Survey to test the entire online process.
2. Amy and Mary will work together to implement the distribution plan for the Town Survey agreed upon at the Planning Commission meeting on October 4, 2023.
3. Chris will meet via Zoom with Alison Low and Jesse Noone of NVDA on Friday, October 20, 2023, to discuss Maidstone's application for the FY24 Municipal Planning Grant.

ADJOURN:

The business of the meeting having been concluded, Bob made a motion to adjourn; Bruce seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:09 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary von Alt